



## Press Clipping Article

**Title:** Meeting to ponder growers cooperative facility's future

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**Lead:**

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The Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy will hold a meeting Thursday night to discuss the future of the West Kentucky Growers Cooperative facility in western Daviess County.

The vegetable cooperative officially dissolved this year, after several seasons of braving the brutally competitive commercial vegetable market. While some growers made money over the years, the cooperative itself never turned a profit and defaulted on loans it received from the Agricultural Development Board.

The state Agricultural Finance Corp. owns the facility. The building is being rented by area growers this summer, who are using the facility's vegetable cooler, but that isn't considered a long-term option.

Keith Rogers, executive director of the agricultural policy office, said Tuesday the meeting is a chance for local farmers to voice their opinions on how they'd like to see the building used.

The board will release a request for bids to use the facility next week, Rogers said. Comments from the meeting will be used to shape the request for bids, he said.

"This is the one opportunity the area producers will have to weigh in on what type of (entity) will go in there," he said. While the building could be used for storage, the facility is ideally suited as a vegetable processing facility, Rogers said.

"To benefit the agricultural community and producers, it's going to have to remain in some type of value-added" business, he said. "The basic structure of the building and the cooler space are likely going to be the main parts (a potential renter) looks at."

The ag board hopes to enter into a three-year lease agreement with a vegetable company. At the end of the lease, the company would have the option of purchasing the facility, Rogers said.

"We believe that would give a company three years to come in and establish a relationship with farmers," he said. " ... They're going to have to put in a pretty heavy investment to make that work."

"If we get no bid or proposals that (the board is) willing to accept, eventually selling the facility would be the last resort," Rogers said.

Some vegetable companies have indicated they might want to rent the facility in 2007. "There have been several companies that I'll call heavily involved in the vegetable industry that have expressed some interest," Rogers said.

To Attend

The Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy will meet at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Daviess County Extension office to discuss future uses of the West Kentucky Growers Cooperative facility. The extension office is at 4800A New Hartford Road, behind Owensboro Community & Technical College.

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